

GOD WORKS ADVERSITY FOR GOOD - Part 3 - Acts 22:26-30 – November 15th, 2009

- This is part three of a teaching titled; "God Works Adversity for Good." Paul is in a very difficult set of circumstances here in chapter 22.
- However, what we see here is how it is, and the way it is that God takes the adversity and works it out for Paul's good and God's glory.

1. In our pain and suffering (Verses 23-24)

- Paul's about to be flogged. This form of torture was so cruel inflicting such unspeakable pain and suffering one either confessed or died.
- This suffering isn't foreign to Paul. Not only is he no stranger to this, he actually anticipated this because the Lord had called him to this.

2. Through our legal rights (Verse 25)

- Paul exercises his legal rights as a Roman citizen. As a citizen it was against the law to bind him and a capital offense to scourge him.

3. By our weaknesses (Verses 26-28)

26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen." 27 The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes, I am," he answered. 28 Then the commander said, "I had to pay a big price for my citizenship." "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.

- v26 Naturally the centurion is alarmed and goes to the commander asking him what he is going to do because Paul is a Roman citizen.
- v27 Upon hearing this, the commander goes to Paul and asks him if he is really a Roman citizen, to which Paul responds; "Yes, I am."
- v28 The commander tells Paul that he had to pay a big price for his citizenship. Then Paul tells him that he was born a Roman citizen.

- What in the world is going here, and why did the Holy Spirit have Luke record this seemingly nebulous detail for us in this, his account?
- I believe the Holy Spirit wants us to see how God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong, in the eyes of the world.
- Imagine the scene here; you have this powerful Roman commander paying to become a citizen, then you have Paul who's born one.

"Something of this sort may have been in the tribune's mind as he said, It cost me a very large sum of money to obtain Roman citizenship - the implication being that the privilege must have become cheap of late if such a sorry-looking figure as Paul could claim it."

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- Make no mistake about it, Paul was indeed a very sorry-looking man. How do we know this? Paul actually tells us this in his letters.

2 Corinthians 10:10 "For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." NKJV

As one aptly noted; "The name Paul ...is a Greek word meaning 'small or little'. He was short bald and bow-legged His enemies gave him the name Paul in an attempt to defame him. He was a short man with a poor speaking voice and poor hand writing." Another writer describes him this way; "Paul was of a small stature with meeting eyebrows, bald headed, bow-legged ...hollow-eyed, and a large crooked nose"

- In spite of the Apostle's outward appearance of weakness, God was able to confound the strength and power of a Roman commander.

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." NIV

- We have an example of this when King Asa of Judah in his weakness relied on the strength of an alliance with Syria instead of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 16:7-9 7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. 8 Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars." NKJV

4. Through our circumstances (Verses 29-30)

29 Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains. 30 The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.

- v29 Those about to interrogate Paul withdraw immediately, and the commander becomes alarmed that he's bound a Roman citizen.
- v30 The commander releases Paul to find out why he's being accused. He orders Paul to stand before the chief priests and Sanhedrin.

- This brings up an interesting question; "why did the Paul wait until he was bound before telling them that he was a Roman Citizen?"
- I believe it was because he knew that "under the circumstances," he would have a stronger case in waiting until the law was broken.
- In other words, Paul discerned his circumstances in that the Lord was setting up a divine appointments and divine opportunities.

- His circumstances were such that he preached to a mob and now he has an appointment to preach to the chief priests and Sanhedrin.
- The Sanhedrin was the Jewish Congress. What makes this opportunity so interesting is that Paul was once a member, (Acts 26:10).
- It seems Paul knew "that" God would work his circumstances for his good and God's glory, he just didn't know "how" God would do it.

Ecclesiastes 7:14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him. NKJV